

**Gulf of Mexico Alliance Regional Restoration Coordination Team
Conference call 03-28-07, 3:00pm CST**

Participants:

**Drew Puffer (EPA)
Bobbi Reed (GMF)
Kristopher Benson (NOAA)
Tom Calnan (TGLO)
Columbus Brown (USFWS)
Robert Seyfarth (MDEQ)
Randy Runnels (FDEP)
Greg DuCote (LDWF)
Carl Ferraro (ADCNR)**

**Quenton Dokken (GMF)
John Bowie (EPA)
Doug Jacobsen (EPA)
Garry Brewer (USGS)
Lynn Martin (USACE)
Bob Bosenberg (USACE)
Kendal Keyes (TPWD)
Rafael Calderon (TNC)
Woody Woodrow (TPWD)**

1.) Recap of Federal Working Group (FWG) meeting action items

KB: All Gulf states are represented on this call, so fed agency reps want to pass on content of discussions at the FWG meeting last week and follow up on action items discussed at the Regional Restoration Coordination Team (RRCT) meeting in Mobile. AL/MS workshop presentations are being copied to the working website; BR, CD, & KB are working on the notes from the meeting, including updates to the action matrix, and task/action items. The Alliance Management Team (AMT) & FWG have tasked team coordinators for all five Priority Issue Teams (PITs) with exercise intended to clarify key issues & actions each team is dealing with. The RRCT has good start on this with efforts made at each workshop to address actions in the matrix; fed reps present at the FWG meeting in Silver Spring envision the product of this exercise to be something like an introduction & conclusion to the matrix as it currently exists (not a re-statement of what is currently in the matrix). This would provide detail about what the matrix contains and why, specifically clarifying fed agency reps' understanding of actions with review of action statements by state reps, identifying actions or parts of actions as technical/scientific or policy/process oriented, parties responsible for carrying out the actions (as well as contributors/collaborators), and mid-term (i.e., 12-month) outcomes/products for each action. The exercise presents an opportunity to convey team issues/priorities to the AMT/FWG before the end of April. Did other federal reps understand this action to be as stated?

LM: Description captures the intent of the exercise fairly well.

CB: Fed reps need to provide feedback to states on feasibility of solutions proposed to address actions.

WW: What's the point of the exercise?

KB: Initially had the same question, but see value in ensuring that feds correctly understand what states want to accomplish by each action and how, through policy recommendations. Though meeting notes from Mobile aren't yet complete, the states actually identified a couple of similar actions during that meeting; specifically, CF indicated that state reps would hold a conference call to clarify what the team hopes to accomplish with regard to action item #5 (streamlining restoration permitting processes), and that once policy recommendations are developed, state reps will need to meet to review the recommendations before forwarding to the AMT.

WW: States have identified what they want to accomplish through round-robin workshops and can't really progress to deal with other actions until round-robins are finished. The workshops provide the background information the team will need to address other actions, and the team can't necessarily provide other recommendations to address actions until the workshop series is complete. The State-hosted workshops enable the states to work toward understanding their similarities and differences regarding the issues in the action matrix, relative to each state's perspectives and experiences. States will likely need to negotiate about recommendations once regional issues are fully vetted. This is the reason for state rep reticence in dealing with Governors Action Plan (GAP) implementation actions at

the workshops and for ineffectiveness of those conversations; we don't have all the info we need to do so.

LM: That's important feedback. State perspective then is that elaborating on the issues and identifying responsibilities for follow-up is premature until they have completed the discussions that the set of state-hosted workshops is intended to enable & facilitate.

WW: We might get more out of dealing with a single action item at each workshop, and dealing with an action that is particularly at issue in the host state.

QD: The Gulf of Mexico Foundation (GMF) intends to circulate a questionnaire that will clarify these issues as articulated by state reps.

KB: Questionnaire response could form basis for discussion of single action item at each workshop.

WW: Team needs to know what the questionnaire will address & who the audience is.

GD: Agreed

JB: GMF could route questionnaire to team members & get feedback on questionnaire itself, as the Gulf Regional Sediment Management Master Plan (GRSMMP) team did, before circulating it for responses to the questions.

TC: Will the implementation session deal with all actions plus one in detail, or just one action?

KB: Just one. The three that appear to need this type of focused discussion are 4 (resolve environmental compliance issues affecting conservation & restoration efforts), 5 (streamline permitting requirements), & 6 (identify administrative & legal processes in granting agencies that facilitate or impede restoration & conservation project planning & implementation). Based on discussions at the AL/MS-hosted meeting, Heidi Recksiek is drafting a list of contacts to add to the team to work on R-2 actions, and plans to participate in the next RRCT call to discuss.

QD: More focused approach needed to get to policy recommendations on these actions. Which actions will be addressed at which workshops?

WW: States need to discuss which actions to attack & when.

CB: In implementing projects, getting grants comes first, then project managers have to deal with regulatory agency processes. Might deal with actions at workshops in that order.

GD: That comment actually points to a frequent problem in the implementation sequence for projects, in that an applicant has difficulty getting funding unless a lot of front-end regulatory work has already been done without funding support.

KB: Propose to deal with grants in Texas, because specific problems with grant-making processes have been raised by TX reps (i.e., lack of public awareness of funding opportunities & failure of fed agencies to coordinate timing & admin of grants to make large-scale project implementation feasible). Questionnaire responses should be submitted in time to discuss at the TX/MX workshop in May.

CF & RS: Agreed.

CB: Other issues associated with these actions are not yet captured in the matrix; these discussions need to bring these issues out.

2.) Logistics for upcoming TX round-robin workshop

BR: Hotel contract with the Hotel Galvez is signed. Dates are May 22-24, and GMF is working with TX & Mexico on agenda, which will have a day for TX issues, a day for Mexico issues, and half a day for GAP implementation discussion.

TC: TX agenda is being developed, and state reps will attend field trips to restoration sites the afternoon of the 21st.

JB: Are field trips open?

WW: No, space is limited.

QD: Mexican reps are excited and all intend to be at the meeting. They see an opportunity to develop a national mandate for restoration in Mexico.

RR: Do they have support from high levels of Mexican government?

QD: President Calderon is supportive, and state-owned oil company PEMEX is putting money on the table for restoration/conservation. The governor of Tamaulipas is also supportive, though in Mexico, there is no such thing as state waters. All marine resources are federally controlled.

3.) Implementation workshop in July & Florida round-robin workshop

KB: Two main advantages to RRCT participating in implementation workshop proposed by the AMT for July 10-12 are the ability to interface with AMT members & ability to bring R-2 sub-team members together with current team.

RR: Team is reluctant to merge the implementation workshop proposed by the AMT with the RRCT round-robin due to time constraints. To deal adequately with Florida restoration issues, Caribbean issues, implementation actions, R-2 actions, and interface with the AMT, one meeting will be too short. As discussed by e-mail, the main issue is ability of state reps to get approval & funding to travel to both meetings. Also, approval of state leadership is needed; in FL leadership is in flux; rumored to be passed from Stephanie Bailensen to Bob Ballard.

WW: Agreed; want to attend both meetings if possible.

RR: Process/implementation focus will be important in the July meeting; the FL workshop needs to be separate.

DP: Phil Bass indicates FL leadership actually currently shared by Bailensen & Ballard.

CF: AL has no alternate to attend the July meeting.

CB: State federal aid coordinators should be part of the discussion.

WW: They will be at some point.

JB: July meeting presents a meeting of opportunity for the RRCT to go further than planned in the round-robins.

All State Reps: Concur. Will attend both if possible.

KB: Will get details of funding available for travel to July meeting, since it isn't necessarily covered by the GMF award from the EPA-GMP. Not sure if NOAA, EPA, or both will provide travel support for PIT reps, but the RRCT is large and this needs clarification soon.

DP: Will work with GFM to use award money if possible/necessary.

BR: FL round-robin meeting scheduled for week of Aug. 20 at Weeden Island facility.

BB: Close to the end of the fiscal year & could be problematic for fed participation.

RR: Team should continue on aggressive schedule to complete round-robins.

KB: Can state reps get travel authorization for both meetings?

CF: Grant funding allows for ease of authorization.

RR: Have Caribbean contacts been made?

QD: Yes, GMF will bring parties to the table. Relationships already strong due to GMF/Community-based Restoration Program development in Caribbean.

KB: Cuba presents a hole in the ecosystem-based management picture.

QD: Given the political climate, getting Cuba involved is not feasible & will not be for the foreseeable future.

Meeting adjourned at ~4:30pm CDT.